

## **AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES**

### **June 4, 2009**

**Members Present:** Daniel Clapp, Doris Holden, Joan Golowich, Joel Gordon, Rosemary Kofler, Kathy Koplow, Juana Trujillo, Mary Jane Laus (pending new COA member)

**Absent:** Barbara Sutherland

**Select Board Liaison:** Gerry Weiss

**Staff Present:** Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Karen Erman (Administrative Assistant), Giovanna Mix (Administrative Assistant for Programs), Priscilla Robbins (Senior Aide Program)

**Guests:** Jan Dizard and Sandra Lapollo (Ad Hoc Survey Committee)

#### **Welcome:**

Dan Clapp, Co-Chair, called the Council on Aging meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

#### **Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

The minutes of the April 2, 2009 meeting were approved and accepted.

#### **Friends of Amherst Senior Center Treasurer's Report:**

**Doris** provided a handout. There is \$10,685.38 in the checking account and \$53,444.51 in the investment account. Money raised by the Friends for FY09 to date is \$12,684.65. The Treasurer's Report was approved and accepted.

### **CONTINUING BUSINESS**

#### **Ad Hoc Survey Committee:**

**Jan Dizard** reminded us that a Senior Center survey has been traditionally done every 10 years. The study done in 2000 was not in-depth and contained little on trends. Therefore, the Ad Hoc Committee, which was formed about one year ago, felt the need for better planning and a more comprehensive survey, given the looming fiscal constraints faced by the Town. A sampling of the Baby Boomer generation seemed important in order to assess their plans upon retirement and their need for SC services and programs. Sandra Lapollo, Director of the Chicopee COA, had done a comprehensive survey of seniors and Boomers in Chicopee in 2003. The committee enlisted her help and the document she used. Letters for proposals to do a survey were sent out to professional groups at UConn and UMass. The UMass bid was for about \$8,500. The researchers were willing to do the work pro bono. It was about one-third of the CT bid. The committee has had a few meetings with the researchers at UMass to explain the data we want them to collect and analyze. They are now busy designing the questionnaire. The committee is on the verge of signing a contract with the researchers at UMass. It would be an enormously helpful document. With the likelihood of budget cuts, it is better to have information on where we can cut and have the least negative effect on the people the SC serves. Anticipating better times in the future, it is good to know where the SC should expand and what its seniors are going to expect and need. The SC needs a good picture of the nature and the needs of future SC users.

The researchers expect to finish data collection by the end of summer and have a report ready for the COA and the Town by mid-fall.

**Dan** informed the COA: We are seeking a vote of support to move forward with the survey. We are seeking a vote to ask the Friends to fund the survey.

**Rosemary** added that even though funding may not be available at the moment for an expansion of services, the results of the survey would be a guide for how to expand when the money does become available. Also, the information obtained would give us an advantage in applying for grants because it would provide documentation of the needs.

**Sandra Lapollo** pointed out that the Federal Government is providing a lot of stimulus money directed at health promotion and prevention. Information from the survey might help us access some of that money.

**Dan** agreed that in difficult financial times it is much wiser to plan ahead and to have the information that will help us to make such plans. When resources are limited we need to know where to direct those resources to get the most for our money.

**Nancy** said the Friends would meet at 3 PM today to vote on the COA request for support of the survey. Susan Whitbourne, President of the Friends, spoke with the Town Manager. Susan has reservations on

spending the money for the survey. As the Town Manager suggested, Nancy will try to raise money from other sources such as the VNA, CDH or the Housing Authority to help cover the cost, so that such a large amount of money does not have to come from the Friends.

**Doris** (also member of Friends) stated that she has been concerned about the purpose of the Friends and the use of the money. She will abstain from today's COA vote.

**Dan** sees the survey as the best use of the Friends money. It is a wonderful and necessary project.

**Joel** reminded us of the mission of the COA – it is the duty of the COA to work toward providing for the needs of the elderly. The survey is exactly what we ought to be doing.

**Joel made a motion: That the COA enthusiastically supports the survey of the Amherst senior population as proposed by the UMass Social and Demographic Research Institute.** It was seconded. The motion passed unanimously with one abstention.

**Rosemary made a motion: That the COA asks the Friends to fund the 2010 survey; that the COA will also seek funding for the survey from other sources to assist or replenish funds from the Friends.** The motion was seconded. It passed unanimously with one abstention.

**Gerry Weiss** said there is about \$278,000 in unspecified budget cuts for Tier 3 cuts. Up until now with Tier 1 and Tier 2 cuts of \$1 million the SC has been spared. Gerry suspects that the SC will get some cuts with Tier 3. He wondered if the Friends money could help with that. Nancy pointed out that the only thing left to cut would be personnel and it is atypical for Friends groups to support personnel.

**Sandra Lapollo** said that it is extremely problematic for Friends to pay for staff because then that staff person no longer works for the Town but for the 501c3. Friends do not like to pick up operating costs. The Friends is an independent 501c-3 corporation whose mission is to raise money to support and fund the activities and services of the SC.

#### **Budget Update:**

**Nancy** said that in the latest round of Town budget cuts, the Town Manager told her that Giovanna Mix's position would be cut. The DEA Formula Grant that was paying her salary would then be applied to a different staff person--Karen. That position cut could likely be circumvented if Town employees voted not to have their cost of living increase (COLA).

**Gerry** said the COLA situation is worse than grim. The Teachers Union will not renegotiate their contract for a 3.5% COLA. The School Committee had to cut 50 positions. All departments are seeing cuts, but the Police Department had a budget increase.

The Senate voted to increase the sales tax, but they also voted to keep it all, so the Town budget is based on **no** increase in sales tax. The Town did add into the budget a meals tax and an increase in room tax because it seems like that will happen.

**Nancy** pointed out that, except for benefits, the proposed 2010 budget for S.C. personnel (with Giovanna being cut) would only need to cover basically two salaries – hers and Maura's. Karen annually raises upwards of \$24,000 for the Town by renting space at Munson which goes into the General Fund, and that, together with the annual DEA Formula Grant of about \$21,000, would mostly defray the Town's outlay for her salary. Among her responsibilities, Giovanna coordinated the efforts of 107 student volunteers in FY09 who helped us greatly in every area of the Senior Center.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Friends Update:**

**Nancy** said that Donna Lee, the entertainer, has offered her services to lead a big fundraiser this fall. It would be a Variety Show with lots of performers. The Friends have agreed to support her.

#### **Nominating Committee:**

**Rosemary** reported. Three COA member's terms will expire at the end of June 2009. David Yaukey's position is one. It has been vacant since he resigned earlier this year. The committee interviewed Mary Jane Laus to fill that position. She has worked in the field of Nutrition. She is a member of Roy Rosenblatt's Community Development Committee and a member of the League of Women Voters. Mary Jane tapes and edits programs for ACTV called "Through the League Lens". She is a member and

Treasurer of the North Congregational Church. Mary Jane is a past Town Meeting member and will look into resuming that position. Larry Shaffer approved her as a member of the COA. Dan Clapp and Barbara Sutherland's positions also expire in 2009. Both have agreed to another 3-year term.

Election of officers will occur at the July meeting.

**Nancy** said there is a change of policy that eliminates term limits.

**Highland Valley Elder Services:**

No report.

**STAFF REPORTS**

**Amherst College Emergency Fund Update:**

**Maura** reported. During the last month some funds were used to assist an elder with utility bills. Some of the people who had loans have repaid their loans. About \$7000 remains out of the original \$10,000.

**Foot Care and Ear Irrigation Donations:**

**Nancy** reported. In lieu of payment Dan suggests a donation to the Wellness Grant for ear irrigations. To date, \$105 has been donated. The Massage Therapist has made donations. One of our foot care nurses has volunteered to not utilize the Wellness Grant and just absorb the cost of foot care herself. That is very helpful to the Wellness Grant fund. It is a positive outcome to our letter to the practitioners.

**Stay Put:**

**Nancy** said there is no new information. The Town lawyer still has not responded to our questions regarding liability.

**Bangs Roof and HVAC Replacement:**

A handout was provided describing the repair project. It also provided John Imbimbo's answers to some basic questions.

Nancy said it would involve removal of 6 or 7 large rooftop units with cranes, removal of rotted roof material and then replacement of it all. There will be times that Bangs will be without air conditioning. There will be odors from rotted roof material and rubber plus noise and dust. The Town is hoping stimulus money will pay for this 'shovel ready' project. It is likely to happen in August.

The COA adjourned at 10:30 AM.

**The next meeting of the COA will be held on July 9, 2009 at 9:00 AM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Rosemary Kofler, Secretary

The approved minutes of the April 2, 2009 meeting were delivered to the Select Board Office to be filed.